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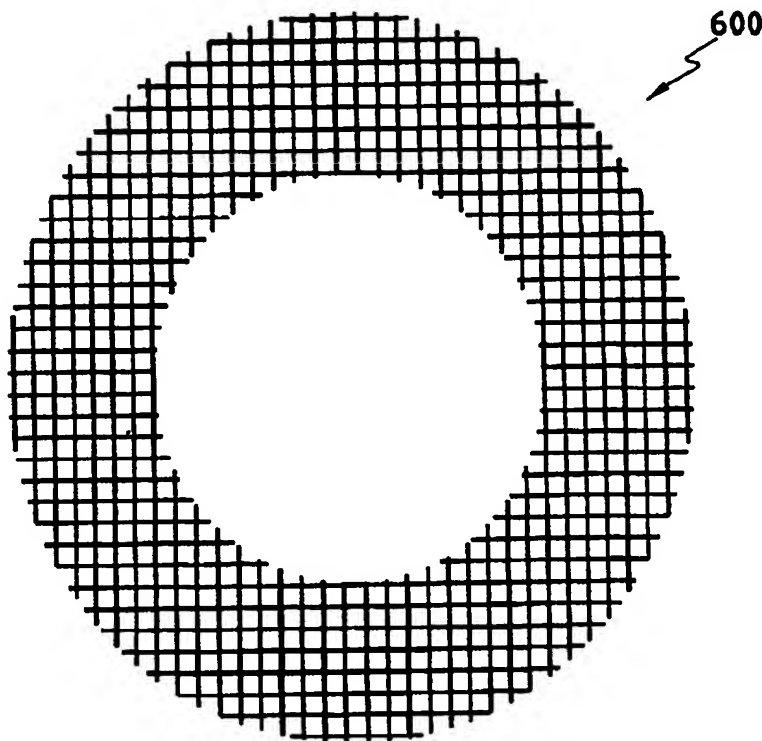
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- (54) Title: ONE PIECE SHIM
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[Continued on next page]



(57) Abstract: A one-piece or otherwise unitary annular shim member made from a perforated metallic material is used to maintain a space between stacked annular preforms during a manufacturing process, such as densification. The metallic material used preferably can withstand at least the temperatures encountered during densification. The one-piece structure advantageously simplifies the arrangement of the preforms in a process chamber and causes less deformation in the preforms. In one example, the shim member is made from a metallic mesh and may utilize a crimped weave structure.

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AMENDED CLAIMS

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1. An annular shim member having first and second opposing surfaces and a plurality of openings formed therethrough,

wherein the member is made from a metallic material and at least partly defines a plurality of radially extending gas flow paths for communicating a radially interior side of the member with a radially exterior side of the member.

2. The member according to claim 1, wherein the metallic material is a bare metallic material.

3. The member according to claim 1, wherein the metallic material is a wire mesh.

4. The member according to claim 3, wherein the metallic material is a refractory material.

5. The member according to claim 3, wherein the metallic member comprises one or more of stainless steel, inconel alloy, titanium, molybdenum, tantalum, and tungsten.

6. The member according to claim 3, wherein the wire mesh has an open mesh area of about 20% to about 80%.

AMENDED SHEET (ARTICLE 19)